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REMARKS

Applicant gratefully acknowledges the Examiner's helpful comments made during the Personal Interview conducted on July 19, 2004, which was attended by Applicant's undersigned representative, Examiner Sedighian and Examiner Tran. Applicant notes that during the Interview, the parties discussed claims 1 and 27-34, and the prior art rejection based on Masuda et al. (U. S. Pat. No. 6,172,803) and Deguchi et al. (U. S. Pat. No. 6,452,721). This Supplemental Amendment is filed to provide additional support for, and expand upon Applicant's arguments presented during the Interview.

An excess claim fee payment letter is submitted herewith for four (4) additional total claims.

Claims 1- 38 are all the claims presently pending in the application. Claims 35-38 have been added to claim additional features of the invention.

Claims 1-26 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over the Masuda et al. (U. S. Pat. No. 6,172,803) (hereinafter, "Masuda") in view of the Deguchi et al. (U. S. Pat. No. 6,452,721) (hereinafter, "Deguchi").

However, Applicant respectfully submits that these references would not have been combined as alleged by the Examiner and even if combined, the alleged combination would not teach or suggest each and every element of the claimed invention.

Further, while neither of the cited references nor their combination teach or suggest the claimed invention, and thus, the rejection could clearly be traversed on the merits, in the interest

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to expedite prosecution, Applicant would point out to the Examiner that the present Application has an earlier U. S. filing date (December 7, 2000) than the Deguchi reference (January 26, 2001), and therefore, Deguchi is not prior art against the claimed invention. Therefore, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw this rejection.


In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 1-38, all the claims presently pending in the Application, are patentably distinct over the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to pass the above application to issue at the earliest possible time.

Should the Examiner find the Application to be other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the local telephone number listed below to discuss any other changes deemed necessary in a telephonic or personal interview.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency in fees or to credit any overpayment in fees to Attorney's Deposit Account No. 50-0481.

Respectfully Submitted,

Date: 7/9/04


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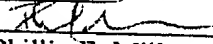
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CERTIFICATE OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that the foregoing Amendment was filed by facsimile with the United States Patent and Trademark Office, Examiner Dzung Tran, Group Art Unit #2633 at fax number (703) 872-9306 this 30th day of July, 2004.


Phillip E. Miller
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